

# Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter

## May 15, 2013



Dear Community Friends,

### Car Prowls

Recently many of our neighborhoods have experienced a high degree of car prowls. This is a concern from Arbor Heights to Mount Baker, Rainier Beach to Alki, and all points in between. Car prowls are a regional problem, not just a neighborhood problem or a City of Seattle problem.

It's frustrating in so many ways. There's the loss of property. We often think items should be safe in our vehicles; we shouldn't have to hide our stuff. In an ideal world, that would be true. Unfortunately, there are those who, given the opportunity, will steal from others. If there is something to take, they'll take it. There's the damage - if any - done to the vehicle. I say "if any" because many times, the thieves don't have to break a window to gain entry to the car; the car is left unlocked.

These crimes are so prevalent, happen very quickly with little chance for immediate police response - *if* the crime is reported - and often occur in late night/early morning hours when there is little chance of the thieves being seen by neighbors.

One frustration for police is that many of these car prowls *are not reported*. As a result, police may not have an accurate picture of the degree of the problem. I know about many of these incidents because I get your emails where you discuss among yourselves what's been happening in your neighborhoods. Our officers hear 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> hand about the incidents because of what neighbors say after the fact. However, the actual number of reported incidents, those that were called in to 911 or reported on-line, do not reflect the level of activity that you are relaying to us. It's not enough to mention in passing that a car was broken into. That crime needs to be reported. Don't just email each other or me; make an official report to 911 or on-line.

I've heard from neighbors that they didn't report the car prowls because it didn't appear that anything was taken, even though it was obvious the car had been gone through. I've also heard from neighbors that there was no damage to the car, or the car was left unlocked, and therefore the car prowls weren't reported. Just because it doesn't appear that something was taken or that no physical damage was done does not mean that no crime was committed. Please, report them. If you don't tell us, we won't know.

### Reporting

To report a car prowls in progress, call 911 immediately. It is a crime in progress and that has a higher priority of response than a crime that occurred some time ago. Answer the call takers questions to the best of your ability.

To report a car prowls that occurred sometime in the past;

- 1) Call 911, tell the call taker up front that it is not an emergency or a crime in progress, but that you want to report a car prowls.
- 2) Using our on-line reporting system: <http://www.seattle.gov/police/report/default.htm>

In either case, whether you call it in or do it on-line, the information will be entered and a record of the incident will be generated, and you will still receive an incident number for that occurrence, even without an officer showing up to take a report.

### The Stuff

A bag containing a laptop. A case with photographic lenses. A passport. A Handbag containing cash, credit and debit cards, driver's license and social security card. A purse with a Samsung Galaxy Tablet, Galaxy 2 phone, wallet, \$3000 cash. An iPod Nano, miscellaneous power tools, keys to managed rental properties. Backpacks with personal items/effects, purse with wallet, credit/debit cards, ID. A pair of Nike Jordan 5's.

These are some of the items that have been taken from vehicles in the past week. All these vehicles were parked on the street, often overnight and often in front of a residence. Aside from thoughts of disbelief (like who leaves \$3000 in cash in a purse on the floor of a car parked on the street overnight?), the obvious question for me is why are we leaving our valuables in our vehicles when we could take them inside the home that's less than 30 feet away?

There are ways to avoid being a victim of car prowling. The most effective step is to not leave anything of value in an unattended vehicle. If you are out running errands and are going to be making multiple stops, don't leave valuables in the interior of the vehicle where they can be seen. Place them in the trunk when you get them before proceeding to your next stop. If you want to enjoy one of our local parks, don't leave valuables inside the passenger compartment; put them in the trunk. However, don't wait until you get to the park to put your valuables in the trunk; you've just shown everyone in the area you've put valuables in the trunk. Put the items in the trunk before you get to the park and leave the vehicle.

### **Recent Car Prowl Arrest**

There is a bit of good news. Early morning on Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>, officers arrested three adult males for Investigation of Car Prowl. Once caught, they were found to have stolen property from multiple vehicles. They admitted to trying car doors, and upon finding an unlocked door, went through the vehicles and helped themselves. They admitted to prowling at about 15 vehicles that night. The good news here is that we were able to catch and arrest three thieves who caused a lot of neighbors a lot of grief. This would not have been possible if not for the neighbor who heard a noise coming from the street, and who upon checking it out saw someone sitting in his neighbor's vehicle who he knew was not his neighbor. These arrests would not have been possible without that neighbor's vigilance and the 911 call that was made. We'd like to acknowledge the officers who responded to that call and made these arrests: Officers, A. Belgarde, D. D'ambrosio, T. Persun, and D. Ward.

We've said many times, car prowling, like most crime, is a crime of opportunity; if you remove or reduce the opportunity, you remove and reduce the crime. Police can respond to a crime once it has occurred. Police can work to deter crime, but can't do so if the crime goes unreported. It is through your reporting that police are able to respond and act. Police will do what can be done. However, it is you as neighbors that prevent crime. It is neighbors taking the step to not leave valuables in the unattended vehicle, but instead take them inside the home or workplace with them. It is neighbors knowing each other to extent that they know the person they see sitting in a neighbor's car doesn't belong there, and they are willing to say something. You can't have community without communication.

Thank you for all you do for your neighborhoods. Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

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